

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Thursday 25th March 2021 at 6pm - Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present: Mr Chris Brewer, Mr Duncan Cooper, Mrs Helen Holley, Mr Jerry Hutchinson, Prof Ray Linforth, Mr Anil Majithia, Mrs Marion Plant, Mr Clive Read, Mrs Tracey Simkins, Dr Andrew Turner and Miss Charlotte Walton.

In attendance: Mrs Carrie-Anne Abdulai (Director HE), Mr Ben Crook (Vice Principal Quality), Mr Thomas Hamilton-Dick (Deputy Principal), Mrs Nicola Morrison (Director Human Resource, Organisational Development & Marketing), Mr David Poole (Chief Operating Officer) and Mrs Rachel Marshall (Clerk).

Prior to the start of the meeting Marion Plant introduced Steve Frampton to Members and summarised his background as a FE college principal, president of the AoC and now AoC Climate Change Commissioner. Steve Frampton had been invited to speak about the national picture and climate change priorities and the work he and the AoC were currently undertaking. As Members were aware, the College had been working to develop its own climate change strategy and the work undertaken to date had been shared with Steve Frampton to ensure the College was starting from a strong and secure base.

Steve Frampton briefed Members on the current development of an action plan responding to the UK Government's stated climate emergency and a strategic sector-wide approach to the Climate Framework on behalf of FE and HE institutions. A key aim of the Climate Change Commission was to work with partners to inform and influence Government thinking and actions regarding the Green Economy and post pandemic recovery, and to demonstrate the need for investment in colleges to support business and industry and the Green Skills needed. He went on to highlight that the College was doing very well in its approach to sustainability and was in the top quartile of colleges nationally.

Following the briefing Members raised a number of matters:

- i. Would it be possible for the College to 'buddy-up' with other colleges in the West and East Midlands?

Steve Frampton explained that a consortium of colleges in the Midlands was being put together. Marion Plant highlighted that colleges in the West Midlands had already formed a 'green group'.

- ii. There appeared to be a number of emerging 'green' themes arising from the impact of the pandemic.

Steve Frampton agreed, highlighting that the pandemic was bringing about radical economic change and enabling organisations to re-set and pivot in different ways to take advantage of the opportunities that were becoming available and to ask what was in the best interests of college communities and students.

- iii. What were the barriers to the work being undertaken and the arguments against responses to climate change?

Steve Frampton highlighted the following barriers; inadequate investment and local opportunities, culture (in terms of needing a vision which emphasised the importance of, and need for this work) and the ability to find the time and headspace to engage with and manage the situation.

- iv. How should success be measured?

Steve Frampton explained that a toolkit was currently in development which would support colleges to measure success.

Following the briefing and discussion, Ray Linforth thanked Steve Frampton for giving his time and delivering a compelling and useful briefing on the work of the AoC Climate Change Commission and

for providing practical support and advice. He extended an invitation to Steve Frampton to come back and continue the discussion with Members in 12 months' time.

Steve Frampton left the meeting at 6pm

Ray Linforth welcomed everyone to the meeting which was quorate.

1. Routine and Standing Items

1.1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Karen Baxter and Rav Hothi.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

1.3 Minutes of a Meeting held on Monday 5th October 2020

The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 8th December 2020 were approved. (Proposer: Anil Majithia; seconder: Charlotte Walton).

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 25th January 2021 were approved. (Proposer: Jerry Hutchinson; seconder: Clive Read).

1.3.1 Schedule of Actions

See attached Schedule.

- i. Action 4 - Members discussed the continuing inclusion of online attendance as a discrete KPI in the dashboard. It was agreed that the KPI could be removed from the dashboard on the basis that the trends would continue to be monitored and reported in the summary narrative reports to the Students, Learning & Quality Committee and the Corporation.

1.3.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

1.4 Chair's Action

Ray Linforth reported that he had taken no chair's action since the last Corporation meeting in December 2020.

2. Strategic Developments

2.1 Principal's Briefing including Covid-19 Update

Marion Plant provided the following update:

i. Covid-19 Update:

It was reassuring to report that the number of positive staff and student tests were declining (there had been no positive tests from staff), and the College was starting to feel more and more 'normal'. Compliance with all requirements was excellent and there was an increasing level of compliance with the wearing of face coverings.

Significant work had taken place to deliver over 1000 lateral flow tests in College. Thanks were extended to Ray Linforth who had volunteered to support in the Nuneaton Campus test centre. The cost to the College of delivering the tests had been significant; however there had now been a move away from testing in College to testing at home and the current focus in the test centres was on distributing lateral flow test kits.

The significant majority of students were now back in College for two days a week and were receiving half a day on-line learning. Different cohorts had different attendance

patterns and a number of students had elected to continue with on-line learning. The biggest challenge rested with skills development and creating opportunities for students to update their skills.

Guidance on the processes and requirements for teacher assessed grades (QTAGs), which were replacing the usual summer exams, was still awaited. Significant work in May 2021 was anticipated and planning for this was underway.

Ben Crook explained that staff had up to the Easter break to digest the advice that would be forthcoming and then implement the process for final submission of the outcomes by 14th May 2021. The process would be different from the previous year and the issues were complex. Staff were aware of the substantial work that was required.

It was important to recognise the intense focus required of staff and students post the Easter holidays. Weekly staff surveys had been deployed to 'check-in' with staff and assess how they were feeling and how they were managing at work. Feedback from the surveys was positive and written comments were being reviewed and where appropriate responded to. The organisational 'temperature' was positive but there were levels of anxiety with individuals carrying different levels of challenge in their home lives. There had been a good take up of the support the College was offering staff and staff wellbeing initiatives had been extended, including the roll-out of a new email protocol. Clinically extremely vulnerable members of staff would be returning to College after Easter.

Daily student attendance reporting to the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) was continuing. 280 laptops had been made available to students (with an additional allocation received from the Department for Education in January 2021) and student wellbeing and enrichment support had been extended.

ii. **College Update**

Funding had been secured to develop a Digital Innovation Centre and relocate the College restaurant into Nuneaton town centre through the 'Towns Fund Bid'. The detail on this was awaited and the Executive was committed to seeking relevant approvals.

There was huge interest in the College's partnership development at Magna Park with a recent very successful employer webinar and launch.

The capital works at the Nuneaton Campus were progressing well and the improvements were being well received.

iii. **Regional Update**

Increasing activity by the Coventry & Warwickshire LEP was evident with the publication of its Reset Implementation Plan.

A very positive introductory meeting had taken place with the new Vice Chancellor at De Montfort University.

The development of a new free school at 'Top Farm' had been given the green light. It was unlikely to include post-16 provision.

iv. **National**

The White paper 'Skills for Jobs for Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' had been published and a paper setting out its implications would be presented later in the meeting.

There was an increased focus on traineeships, multi-company apprenticeships and devolution structures which included a review of LEPs. It was currently unclear where this devolution agenda was heading. A new 'Community Renewal Fund' had also been made available and bids would be received after April 2021. The National Living Wage had increase to £8.91 per hour and the College was aligned with this increase.

v. The Midland Academies Trust

The Hartshill School fully funded rebuild had been confirmed and the School had undergone a recent Ofsted section 5 virtual inspection, the outcome of which was positive. All the Trust's academies were now fully opened and in week 1 had tested 3000 pupils. Staff were also preparing for implementing QTAGs.

Marion Plant then highlighted the following further matters:

- i. The Executive Team had just received Directors curriculum planning presentations focused on 2021/22 and beyond. These presentations had been the best heard over recent years. They were very encouraging and exciting and would be shared at the Students, Learning & Quality Committee meeting in June 2021.
- ii. The Further Education Commissioner (FEC) had just published a new set of financial benchmarks and KPIs for colleges. Most notable was the increase in the cash-days KPI from 21 to 25 days. This was an issue for the College, and the ESFA had already made a request for information. This development was disheartening in light of all the progress that the College had made.
- iii. The ESFA had also announced that the AEB threshold for 2020/21 would be 90%. The College was projected to achieve this threshold; however the announcement had caused panic in the sector. The threshold for 2019/20 had been 67%.

Following discussion, Members received the update briefing.

2.2 Confidential - Strategic Dashboard Monitoring 2020/21

2.3 Confidential - Nuneaton Campus Development

3. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

3.1 Office for Students Condition Compliance

Ben Crook introduced the paper explaining that it provided an overview of compliance with the conditions of registration as required by the Office for Students(OfS). The Corporation, as the College's governing body, had to ensure the College's compliance with these conditions. Andrew Turner, chair of the Students, Learning & Quality Committee had reviewed the paper in advance.

The OfS had written to all higher education providers in January 2021 setting out the actions it expected providers to take in assessing ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements during the most recent phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the requirement to review compliance with condition C1 (guidance on consumer protection law) during the 2020/21 recruitment cycle

Carrie-Anne Abdulai the provided the following overview:

- i. A full review against the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance and delivery of the College's HE provision had taken place during autumn term 2020. Further checks would be undertaken in the spring and summer terms. This included reviewing the steps being taken to ensure that all information provided to students was clear and transparent, enabling students to achieve without detriment.
- ii. The steps taken to communicate with students were outlined, including the actions taken where students did not engage in the autumn term and the establishment of student forums to monitor student satisfaction.
- iii. A proactive approach had been taken, no formal complaints had been received and the Student Voice was largely positive. Internal satisfaction survey outcomes demonstrated student satisfaction and confidence that they would achieve and that they were confident in returning to College.

Andrew Turner then highlighted that this was great assurance from students that the College had delivered on its promises to them which was a great outcome.

Ray Linforth thanked Carrie-Anne Abdulai for the work she and her team were undertaking and asked her to pass on the positive comments from the Corporation.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

3.2 Students, Learning & Quality Committee Assurance Report and Minutes from 11th February 2021

Members noted the Assurance Report and the minutes from Students, Learning & Quality Committee meeting on 11th February 2021.

4. Financial Matters and Arrangements for Internal Control

4.1 Confidential - Financial Performance Report including Period 7 Management Accounts

4.2 Strategic Risk Report 2020-21

David Poole introduced the paper and confirmed that the Audit Committee had recently scrutinised and challenged the risk report. He then highlighted the following risks:

- i. Short term solvency and cash days - mitigating actions were in place to manage the risk, namely robust cash flow management process and the securing of a working overdraft.
- ii. Breach of bank covenants - negotiations were currently taking place with the College's banks to re-set the covenants to ensure compliance.
- iii. Covid-19 - a separate, detailed risk assessment was in place which was continuously updated and reported on regularly to the Executive Team, Audit Committee and Corporation.

Members raised the following challenges:

- i. Why was the detail on assurance levels and controls not completed in the risk register?

David Poole explained that this detail was currently under development as the new risk reporting software was rolled out. Progress on the implementation of the software had been discussed at the Audit Committee. It had been agreed that in light of the ongoing situation more time should be spent on managing the risks than on data inputting.

- ii. It also appeared that the inherent residual risks and the targets were the same. When would these issues be rectified?

David Poole explained that the implementation of the software would continue, and changes would be made for the next Audit Committee meeting. The Covid-19 risk level had remained at Amber as the impact of lockdown was unknown. The risk level was however likely to reduce as the year progressed and was probably lower than anticipated, as the risks were being so well managed.

Anil Majithia, as Audit Committee Chair confirmed that significant progress was being made on the implementation of the risk register software and that an acknowledgement of the work taking place was required; the Committee was delighted with the work that was taking place.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

4.3 Resource Committee Assurance Report and Draft Minutes from 27th January 2021 and Draft Minutes from 15th March 2021.

Following discussion, Members received the assurance report and minutes.

4.4 Audit Committee Assurance Report and Draft Minutes from 8th March 2021

Following discussion, Members received the assurance report and minutes.

5. Governance

5.1 Outcomes of from Written Resolutions

Members were asked to note the following outcomes from two recent written resolutions:

- i. To appoint Rav Hothi to the Corporation until 31st July 2022.
- ii. To approve the estates framework document and the basis of the stage 1 transformation bid.

5.2 An Overview of the White Paper - Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth

The Clerk introduced the paper which presented a summary of the Government White Paper, published on 21st January 2021 and which set out proposed reforms to post-16 technical education and training.

Tom Hamilton-Dick spoke about the work the College was undertaking to implement Higher Technical qualifications and to include relevant elements of the White Paper into curriculum planning going forward. This included a focus on employer engagement with the first of a number of employer forum meetings taking place in April 2021. Fifty-one employers would be taking part in a session on the College curriculum and the need to upskill students. In addition significant work on qualifications, in conjunction with employers, was taking place.

Members highlighted that the number of employers who would be taking part in the forum was a fantastic response. They also indicated that a watching brief was required on the White Paper which could provide some opportunities and require some actions to be taken.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Policies

6.1.1 Travel and Subsistence Policy 2021

Members approved the Travel and Subsistence Policy 2021 (Proposer: Anil Majithia; seconder: Helen Holley).

7. Other Matters

7.1 Release of Papers

Members agreed to the release of papers with the exception of:

- i. Agenda item 2.2 Strategic Dashboard Monitoring 2020/21 Closing Position as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- ii. Agenda item 2.3 Nuneaton Campus Development as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- i. Agenda item 3.2 Students, Learning & Quality Committee Assurance Report and Draft Minutes from 11th February 20201 as they contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- ii. Agenda item 4.1 Financial Performance Report including Period & Management Accounts and Recruitment Update as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.

Agenda item 1.3

- iii. Agenda item 4.2 Strategic Risk Report as the paper contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- iv. Agenda item 4.3 Resource Committee Assurance Report and Draft Minutes from 27th January 2021 and Draft Minutes from 15th March 2021. as they contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- v. Agenda item 4.4 Audit Committee Assurance Report and Draft Minutes from 8th March 2021 as they contained information which was considered to be commercially sensitive.
- vi. Agenda item 8.1 Confidential Minutes of a Meeting Held on Tuesday 8th December 2020.
- vii. Agenda item 8.2 Confidential Resource Committee Minutes from 27th January 2021 and Draft Minutes from 15th March 2021
- viii. Agenda item 8.3 Audit Committee Confidential Draft Minutes from 8th March 2021
- ix. Agenda item 9.1 People, Strategy & Governance Committee Draft Confidential Minutes from 22nd March 2021 for External Members Only
- x. Agenda item 9.2 Students, Learning & Quality Committee Draft Minutes from 11th February 2021 for External Members Only

7.2 Date of the Next Meeting:

Members agreed the date of the next meeting as Thursday 8th July 2021 at 6pm via Microsoft Teams Meeting.

The meeting finished at 7.54pm

Signed: (Chair) Date: